

Effective Parent/Teacher Conferences

Parent/teacher conferences help build the teamwork needed for students to learn better.

Before the conference:

1. Make an appointment with the teacher(s). Decide in advance of contacting the teacher/counselor who you would like to attend the conference. Will the student attend? State the purpose of the conference.
2. What is it you want to learn in the conference? Prepare some questions in advance.
 - a. How is my child doing in class?
 - b. Does my child use his time well?
 - c. Does my child have good work habits?
 - d. Does she usually turn in her work on time?
 - e. Does she have any missed assignments?
 - f. Does my child have friends at school?
 - g. How well does my child get along with others?
 - h. What can I do at home to support what you are doing?
3. Talk with your child. Ask what he thinks the teacher will say. Does she have any concerns about school? What is going well at school?

During the conference:

1. Be positive. Approach the conference as a friend.
2. Restate the purpose of the conference. Stick to only relevant issues.
3. Focus on the speaker – make eye contact, nod head, ask questions, etc.
4. Listen without judging, even if you don't agree.
5. Make sure the teacher says one positive thing about your child.
6. Ask the teacher to explain anything you don't understand.
7. Be prepared to talk and listen.
 - a. Tell the teacher what you see at home.
 - b. Talk about the child's interests.
 - c. Express concerns tactfully.
 - d. Give the teacher any information that would help them understand the child – learning style, medical concerns, family issues, etc.
4. Ask good questions:
 - a. What does my child do best? Can you give me some examples?
 - b. What are my child's weaknesses and how can I help?
5. Develop a specific plan of action, and outline who will be responsible for each item. It would be best to put the plan in writing, and give each person a copy.
 - a. The student is responsible for..... (if the student is not present, bring them in at the end and review with them)
 - b. The parent is responsible for
 - c. The teacher is responsible for
6. Summarize what has been discussed and agreed upon, and what follow up will take place.
7. End the conference on a positive note.

After the conference:

1. Follow up – stay in touch with the teacher by phone or email.
2. Follow through on your responsibilities: checking and signing the agenda nightly, etc.

How to handle negatives from teachers:

1. Separate the teacher from the statements he/she is making. Respect the person even if the argument makes no sense to you at all.
2. Continue to listen with an open mind and do not blame or attack.

What teachers want parents to remember:

1. Be on time and be sensitive to time constraints.
2. Be courteous and calm – no blaming or attacking.
3. Know that the teacher has the student's best interest at heart.
4. Listen with an open mind and be willing to hear the truth.
5. Reinforce agreed upon suggestions at home.
6. Be consistent at home with your child.